

Family Information Service

Spring Newsletter for Families and Professionals in Blaenau Gwent



Edition 4: July 2025

Welcome to the Blaenau Gwent FIS Newsletter! Here you will find loads of information on local events and groups; what our teams have been up too recently; helpful information and advice; some activities you can do with your little ones and lots more!

Breastfeeding

In partnership with Local Authorities, Aneurin Bevan UHB & Breastfeeding Peer Supporters; we have launched the Breastfeeding Welcome Scheme!

We are looking for businesses and premises across Blaenau Gwent to become 'Breastfeeding Welcome' venues! These spaces will help to promote, protect and support parent's right to breastfeed in public!

Check out some of the venues that have already signed up to the scheme:

- Blaina Integrated Children's Centre
- All Flying Start Hubs
- Railway Tavern Tredegar
- Tredegar Library
- Llanhilleth Miner Institute
- Bryn Bach park
- Bedwellty House and park

If you would like to join our Breastfeeding Welcome Scheme, please get in touch! We will then sign you up for one of our webinars!

See the benefits of being a **Breastfeeding Welcome Venue**

We're looking for businesses and premises across Gwent to become 'Breastfeeding Welcome' venues. Help to promote, protect and support parent's right to breastfeed in public

What are the benefits to my business / premises?
As well as supporting parents' legal right to breastfeed in public, being part of the scheme offers business a number of benefits:
Free publicity, local promotion and potential new customers

Sounds Interesting? **FIND OUT MORE**

A partnership approach developed by Local Authority, Aneurin Bevan UHB & Breastfeeding Peer Supporters

Antenatal Events

Our incredible Flying Start Team will be holding a FREE Antenatal Baby Shower event for pregnant people and their support networks. Join them on the 15th July for a presentation from the midwife; Q&A; information and advice from a range of professionals; and lots of freebies and a FREE raffle!

We can't wait to see you there!
Hope Church, Ebbw Vale
Tuesday 15th July 2025
4pm – 6pm

Dad's Group: Music for Well-Being

Are you a dad looking for a creative outlet to get to know your community or a way to recharge?

Flying Start are pleased to offer a 12-Week Workshop in Blaenau Gwent to bring dad's together through the power of music! Find out more here: <https://bgfis.org.uk/en/what-s-on/upcoming-events/>

01495 369610 | fis@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk | www.bgfis.org.uk

Integrated Children's Centre, High Street, Blaina. NP13 3BN

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Childminding Week

This year, to celebrate Childminding Week, our teams held a Childminders Celebration Event!

Childminders make up an essential part of the childcare available to the children and families in Blaenau Gwent so it was a privilege to recognise and celebrate their accomplishments.

At our celebration event, our childminders shared their thoughts on a 'Shared Vision for Childminding in Blaenau Gwent'. It was amazing to hear all the ideas from our incredible childminders, which will help us continue to work effectively with them in the future.

We were privileged to be able to celebrate our amazing Childminder Pauline Paul, who has been childminding the children of Blaenau Gwent for 30 years!

We were also joined by Pauline's Son and his partner who are also now embarking on their own journey of becoming registered childminders.

We are so proud to celebrate the business Pauline, and all the other childminders, provide.

During our celebration we were joined by Coram PACEY who were able to share information on the fabulous services and support that they have available for the childminders in Blaenau Gwent. We were so lucky to be joined by them and help share their message that Childminders are the Unsung Heroes of Childcare.

If you want to learn more about our fantastic childminders, you can check out the childminding profiles on our Website – bgfis.org.uk. Thank you again to our wonderful childminders – you are all remarkable and help so many families in Blaenau Gwent.

First Friends

Our incredible First Friends childcare setting, run by our fantastic Flying Start Team, was featured by Care Inspectorate Wales in one of their case studies. This was the first of its kind – a great achievement for First Friends!

This case study explored 'Managing children's 'big feelings' from a wellbeing and mental health led approach.' CIW recognised that staff at First Friends had transformed challenging moments into opportunities for growth.

They were supporting children to navigate their emotional journeys and were no longer trying to distract or minimise children's feelings; instead, they were more responsive and receptive to children's cues.

To read the full report and hear about the impact this is having on the children in the setting, click here:

<https://www.careinspectorate.wales/first-friends>



Play Team

In Blaenau Gwent, we are incredibly lucky to have an incredible Play Team who go above and beyond to provide children in the communities with access to play.

During the Easter Holidays we were able to provide eight play sessions in local parks, as well as two play sessions at the Integrated Children's Centre in Blaina. This meant hundreds of children could enjoy play during their two week break! Keep an eye on the Family

Information Service Website and Social Media for the Play Team's summer programme – including National Play Day on the 6th August!

This Spring, we also ran a photo competition looking for the perfect photo of a child playing in nature to feature on our upcoming Play Sufficiency Assessment for the Welsh Government.

We would like to say congratulations again to our photo competition winner! Thank you to Marie Bradley who

sent in this gorgeous photo of Astrid! We had an incredibly hard job choosing this winner as there were so many fantastic photos sent in.

Some of the other amazing entries will still be used throughout our Play Sufficiency Assessment, which will be published this summer!

Thank you again to everyone who took part.



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The Welsh Journey

Did you know, you can start your Welsh Language Journey with your baby from birth!

Introducing Welsh to your baby early on will give your child a good start in becoming bilingual; help give your child a sense of belonging; and make it easier to learn another language! Learning Welsh at an early age can also support your child's future education. Bilingual children tend to think in a more flexible and creative way; they can be better at analysing data and multitasking; and can find it easier to learn additional languages in the future! Your child could be part of the 43% of people across the globe who are bilingual – or the 17% who are multilingual (Preply, 2025).

Take a look at our Welsh Journey below to see how you could support your child's journey. Don't worry if your child is a little older, it's never too late to support their journey.

0 – 18 Months Cymraeg i Blant

Join Cymraeg i Blant for groups like: Baby Massage, Baby Yoga or Welsh Rhyme time, sign and story. You can also join online groups like 'Me and My Baby' and 'Cuppa & Chat'. You can find more information here: Cymraeg for Kids - Meithrin. Or by searching 'Cymraeg i Blant Blaenau Gwent' on Facebook.

0 - 4 Years Tia Fi & Clwb Cwtch

Tia Fi Groups are weekly drop in parent and toddler groups. They are a great opportunity to make new friends and start to develop your language with your little one. These groups are open to anyone, no matter what level of Welsh they speak! We are really lucky in Blaenau Gwent to have a wealth of Tia Fi's. You can find all of these groups on our website.

Clwb Cwtch is an 8 week Welsh taster course for parents to be, parents, carers and extended family members. You can find out more about this course here: <https://meithrin.cymru/clwbcwtsh/>.

2 - 4 Years Cylch Meithrin

Cylch Meithrin's are Welsh-Medium Childcare settings who provide early years' education for children aged two to school age, promoting development through play in a Welsh-speaking environment.

They help children become bilingual while enjoying social interaction and quality learning experiences. Your child does not have to speak to Welsh to join a Cylch Meithrin, the incredible staff will support all children, no matter what their level of language. You can find a full list of Welsh Medium provisions on our website. All provisions are also available for Flying Start families as well!

4+ Years Welsh Medium School

Welsh-medium schools in Wales provide education primarily through the Welsh language, aiming to develop bilingual proficiency in pupils. They promote Welsh culture and identity, ensuring learners can confidently use Welsh in both academic and everyday contexts.

Welsh-medium education offers children the opportunity to become fluent in both Welsh and English, enhancing their cognitive skills and communication abilities. It supports smoother educational transitions, improves future career prospects, and fosters a strong connection to Welsh culture and identity. You can find out more about supporting your child's bilingual journey here: [Becoming Bilingual | Blaenau Gwent CBC](https://meithrin.cymru/clwbcwtsh/).this course here: <https://meithrin.cymru/clwbcwtsh/>.

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Salt

Did you know most people eat too much salt every day?

It's recommended that adults do not consume more than 6 grams of salt – this is less than one teaspoon! Check out these foods that can be high in salt:

- Soy sauce
- Ready-made soup
- Processed sandwich fillings
- Sausages
- Bacon
- Crisps
- Pastries
- Pizza
- Cheese
- Gravy
- Ketchup
- Soy sauce
- Ready-made soup
- Processed sandwich fillings



How can you cut down on the salt you're consuming?

- Swap the salty snack for homemade snacks! For snack ideas, [click here!](#)
- Reduce the amount of sauce you eat, or buy the reduced-salt versions
- Cook from scratch as much as you can. Processed sandwich fillings, ready meals, takeaways and even tinned soup can contain lots of salt!
- If you keep a salt shaker on the table, pop it back in the cupboard! Try adding flavour using herbs or spices instead!

Online Safety

Did you know, watching streamers has become more and more popular over the last few years. Over 2.5 million people watch streamers on Twitch – the most popular streaming service. While watching streamers can be really fun, it is important to be aware of the risks associated with it. With 66% of 3 – 17-year-olds regularly accessing live streams, and 16% sharing their own content, it is becoming an increasingly important topic.

Spending Money

Lots of streamers are paid by companies to promote products. While this isn't necessarily dangerous, it can encourage children to spend money on products they don't need or want. Some streamers have also unknowingly engaged in scams in the past, meaning viewers lost out on a lot of money.

Streamers can also have 'donate' buttons on their videos, allowing viewers to quickly send money to their favourite streamers. This can escalate quickly, and small amounts of money can become large amounts – particularly when streamers request money to engage with them

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Inappropriate Content

While some videos have family-friendly titles, during a stream, people can talk about anything. They can also stream games that are not appropriate for children and may include violence. Many of the more popular channels and videos include games or language that are not suitable for children.

Misinformation

Streamers can spread misinformation –sometimes intentionally, but sometimes they share an opinion without fully thinking through what they're saying. Some streamers also make controversial comments to get a reaction and boost their interactions. This can influence young viewers to adopt the same opinions. This can become large amounts – particularly when streamers request money to engage with them.

Creative Dad's Group

Flying Start and Inside Out Cymru are excited to be offering a new two-year creative wellbeing programme designed specifically for dads in Blaenau Gwent, funded by the Baring Foundations' Creative Men grants. The project provides a safe, inclusive space to explore creativity, meet like-minded people, and connect with the support available through Flying Start.

Weekly workshops have been running successfully at the Cefn Golau and Brynhithiel Flying Start Hubs, where dads have been coming together to play music, write songs, and share stories. With a mix of child-friendly and dads-only sessions, the project creates space for bonding, self-expression, and personal reflection—helping to support wellbeing, reduce isolation, and celebrate fatherhood.



Lead artist, musician and music therapist Alex Lupo says:

'We're half way through our first two projects and it's so good to see a committed and engaged group of dads coming along to both sessions. We've been using the space each week to get to know each other, share our interests and experiences, listen to music, try out different instruments, write lyrics... and now we're just starting to write our own songs which we're all really excited to record.'

This project responds to a clear gap in support for dads in the area, where most wellbeing services are still focused on mums. By working closely with local partners, we aim to create a sustainable model that listens to dads and builds on their strengths.

A new round of sessions is set to launch this summer, building on the positive feedback from participants, artists, and partners.

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Pathways

Blaenau Gwent Council has received funding through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to support the development of education for parents and carers in Blaenau Gwent.

Courses aim to build skills and knowledge with careers in childcare, social care, as well as general health, well-being and life skills. Improving your skills and knowledge can increase the likelihood of employment, higher wages, and improved well-being. Pathways opens doors to more training opportunities, paving the way for securing a better future for families.

Our team will also be able to support you with volunteering opportunities to further support you in those first steps back into employment.

All of our courses are free and we're here to support you and your individual needs.

To book onto any of our courses please visit: www.ticketsource.co.uk/blaenau-gwent-council or to speak to a member of the team, email us at FIS@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk with your name and number.

Our courses are available to all adults 16+ living/working in Blaenau Gwent. These courses are aimed at increasing your confidence; developing your personal skills; and supporting you to achieve your goals no matter how big or small!

Our programme will be formed of three different pathways – each offering a range of different courses:

- > Steps into Childcare
- > Health, Well-Being & Life Skills
- > Introduction to Social Care



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Families First

Our incredible Families First Team have won their second Social Care Accolade! Check out the below message from the team:

'We are really pleased to let you know that we recently won our second Social Care Accolade!

This year, it was for the category of "Building Brighter Futures for Children and Families," where Social Care Wales received 27 applications in total. The judges' comments included being "blown away" by the number of families who wanted to come and share their experience of being supported by Families First. They also spoke about being "overwhelmed" by the relationships between staff and families and the bond between staff.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you who was part of this journey!

Blaenau Gwent Family Information Service Website

Have you had a chance to check out our new website yet? You can now find an up to date list of parent and toddler groups in the area; a list of all childcare providers in the area; advice on schemes to help you pay for childcare; frequently asked questions; and a list of upcoming events!

Visit us at: <https://bgfis.org.uk/>

Summer Recipe - Homemade Fish and Chips

With summer just around the corner, and hopefully some warm weather, I'm sure you'll find lots of us with that craving for Fish and Chips! Follow this recipe to find a new, and healthier way, to have your summer favourite at home!

What you will need:

- > 4 potatoes (cleaned & cut into 8 chunky wedges)
- > 227g pineapple pieces (in natural juice)
- > 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil
- > 75g of dried wholemeal breadcrumbs
- > 1 egg (beaten with 2 tablespoons of water mixed)
- > 4 fillets of skinless white fish (e.g. Haddock, Cod or Pollock)

What you will need to do:

1. Preheat the oven to 200C (fan 180C, gas mark 6).
2. Lightly grease an oven pan with a little vegetable oil or use an oil spray
3. Put the potato wedges into a roasting tin and add the remaining vegetable oil. Mix these in the tin to ensure they are coated with oil.
4. Season your wedges with black pepper (or any other spice that you prefer).
5. Pop them in the oven to bake for 35 to 40 minutes, turning them over after 20 minutes.
6. Meanwhile, sprinkle the breadcrumbs onto a large plate and season with a little pepper.
7. Dip each fish fillet in the beaten egg, then coat in the breadcrumbs.
8. Place on the oven pan, then transfer to the oven when you turn the potatoes, so that it cooks for 15 to 20 minutes.

You could add mushy peas, garden peas, or a salad on the side! For more healthy recipes, visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/>

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